



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF **ENERGY**

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For Immediate Release

WIPP Employees Among Honorees for Nuclear Footprint Reduction

CARLSBAD, N.M., October 17, 2012 – U.S. Secretary of Energy Steven Chu recently honored a team of federal and contractor employees, including those from the Department of Energy (DOE) Carlsbad Field Office (CBFO) and Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP), for their work in reducing the nuclear footprint at Argonne National Laboratory, near Chicago, Ill.

The award was presented at the Oct. 4 DOE 35th Anniversary Celebration and Secretarial Honor Awards Ceremony in Washington, D.C. The Honor Awards are the Department's highest form of non-monetary employee recognition.

Honorees from CBFO, which provides oversight for WIPP and the National Transuranic (TRU) Program (NTP), are NTP Director J.R. Stroble and NTP Members Tom Morgan, Marcus Pinzel and Andy Walker. Contractor employees representing Nuclear Waste Partnership LLC, the WIPP management and operating contractor, and its sub-contractors, included Kevin Peters, Irene Quintana, Frank Root and Michael Sensibaugh. Also recognized was Wade Weyerman from Los Alamos National Laboratory – Carlsbad Operations.

"It's great that WIPP Team members were among those recognized by this top award from the Department's Secretary," said CBFO Manager Joe Franco. "National

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cleanup is at the core of what we do here at WIPP, and I'm pleased that they were cited for their contributions to the nuclear waste footprint reduction at Argonne."

The team completed what was a three-year initiative to implement Argonne's Nuclear Footprint Reduction and Deactivation Plan. This resulted in significant risk reduction, enhanced compliance and operational cost savings. Among the highlights were: the approval and implementation of nuclear safety documents for seven nuclear facilities; four nuclear facilities were de-inventoried to less than Hazard Category 3 (radiological) status; and a dramatic reduction in nuclear inventory was accomplished. To date, WIPP has received 150 shipments of defense-related transuranic waste from Argonne.

The Waste Isolation Pilot Plant is a U.S. Department of Energy facility designed to safely isolate defense-related transuranic waste from people and the environment. Waste temporarily stored at sites around the country is shipped to WIPP and permanently disposed in rooms mined out of an ancient salt formation 2,150 feet below the surface. WIPP, which began waste disposal operations in 1999, is located 26 miles outside of Carlsbad, N.M.